

House Committees Announce Health Care Reform Draft Proposal

Washington, DC – Today, three House committees announced their draft proposal to reform our health care system and ensure affordable, quality health care—a critical fix to an unsustainably expensive system that hurts families and puts American businesses at a global disadvantage. The committees on Education and Labor, Energy and Commerce and Ways and Means have worked together to present a uniquely American plan that reduces costs to consumers, protects current coverage and preserves the choice of doctors, hospitals and health plans.

“We need health care reform,” Congressman Charlie Wilson (OH-6) said. “The ever rising cost of health care is hurting families and it will prevent our economy from making a full recovery. We have the most expensive health care in the world, but we are not the healthiest country. That just doesn’t make sense and it’s got to change.”

The draft proposal announced today would protect what works in our health care system and reform what does not, encouraging competition to lower costs and increase choice.

“The thing that I like most about this type of reform is that it builds on what works. We’re not going to throw the baby out with the bathwater,” Wilson said. “If you have good coverage that you like, you keep it. The committees have worked hard to protect that choice and I’m glad it’s a key part of the legislation that Congress will start examining through hearings in the coming weeks.”

The plan also provides greater choices by including a public health insurance option.

“I am interested in learning more about the public option,” Wilson said. “But I believe it must compete on a level playing field and adequately reimburse doctors and hospitals.”

Our health care draft proposal fulfills commitments made by this Congress and President Obama to reform health care. The draft proposal:

- Lowers costs for American families by -
 - Putting an end to co-pays and deductibles for preventive care
 - Capping annual out-of-pocket expenses so Americans are no longer driven into financial ruin by the cost of medical care
 - Ending rate increases based on pre-existing conditions, gender, or occupation
 - Offering the group purchasing power of a national pool if buying your own plan is necessary
- Guaranteeing, affordable oral health and vision care for kids
- Offers stability and peace of mind with -

- An end to coverage denials for a pre-existing condition like heart disease, diabetes, or cancer
- The care you need with an end to lifetime limits
- The freedom to make job and life choices not based on health care coverage
- Improves the quality of health care in this country -
 - Doctors--not insurance companies—will be in charge of health care decisions
 - More family doctors and nurses will enter the workforce, at better payment rates, helping to guarantee your access to quality care
- Helps Small Businesses –
 - An exemption from the employer responsibility requirement will be put in place for certain small businesses
 - A new small business tax credit will be available for those firms who want to provide health coverage to their workers, but cannot afford it today.

“I’m particularly pleased about the protections for small businesses in this plan,” Wilson said. “As we move forward with this blueprint for reform, we must work to make sure the plan is fiscally responsible. If we don’t act now, within a decade, we will be spending one out of every five dollars we earn on health care. We can’t leave the burden of the cost of health care to our children and grandchildren.”

Several hearings on the health care reform legislation are scheduled for next week.